



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
Washington, D.C. 20231
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/691,435	10/18/2000	Takashi Yamaguchi	00-631	4930

7590 08/26/2002

Bachman & LaPointe, P.C.
Suite 1201
900 Chapel Street
New Haven, CT 06510-2802

EXAMINER

ASHBURN, STEVEN L

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3714

DATE MAILED: 08/26/2002

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/691,435

Applicant(s)

YAMAGUCHI ET AL.

Examiner

Steven Ashburn

Art Unit

3714

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 18 October 2000.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-22 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-22 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 18 October 2000 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s) _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

MARK SAGER
PRIMARY EXAMINER

DETAILED ACTION***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) do not apply to the examination of this application as the application being examined was not (1) filed on or after November 29, 2000, or (2) voluntarily published under 35 U.S.C. 122(b). Therefore, this application is examined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

Claims 1-4, 13, 15-19 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by *Kaneko*, U.S. Patent 5,879,235 (Mar. 9, 1999).

Kaneko discloses a number drawing apparatus that teaches all the claims as listed below:

- a. A rotating unit having a surface which rolls rolling bodies supplied thereon. *See fig. 3; col. 2:12-15. (Claims 1, 5, 14, 19, 20, 21)*
- b. Driving means for rotating the rotating unit in a fixed plane so that the supplied rolling bodies move outwardly from the rotating unit. *See fig. 3, 11; col. 8:35-44. (Claims 1, 19, 20, 21)*
- c. Information specified by the outward movement of each of the supplied rolling bodies is used as the result of a draw of numbers. *See fig. 14; col. 1:6-9. (Claims 1, 19, 21)*

Art Unit: 3714

- d. Unique information specified by the moving rolling bodies when the bodies have stopped is used as the result of the draw. *See id.* (Claims 2, 14)
- e. A plurality of regions to which unique symbols are assigned are provided along the periphery of the rotating unit and the result of the draw is determined by the symbols assigned to the regions in which the rolling bodies stops. *See id.* (Claims 3, 14, 21)
- f. N different symbols, determined by the outward movement of N rolling bodies, are specified as the results of the draw, wherein N represents a natural number not less than 2. *See id.* (Claims 4, 8)
- g. A plurality of catching units provided along the periphery of the rotating unit wherein the catching units each have a unique symbol assigned to the catching unit in which the moving body is caught. *See fig. 3; col. 1:6-9, 4:15-36.* (Claims 5, 20)
- h. The result of a draw of numbers is specified by the symbols assigned to the catching unit in which the moving rolling body is caught. *See id.* (Claims 5, 20)
- i. The plurality of catching units each include a detecting means for outputting a predetermined signal when the rolling body is caught and the output signal specifies the symbol assigned to the catching unit in which the rolling body is caught. *See col. 7:42-60.* (Claim 6)
- j. The catching units hold the rolling bodies so that the rolling bodies partly protrude and allow the rolling bodies to fall within predetermined timing. *See fig. 4; col. 7:60-64.* (Claim 7)
- k. Rolling-body supply means includes a supply hole for supplying the rolling bodies and a guidance mechanism for accelerating the rolling bodies and for guiding the rolling bodies to the surface. *See fig. 10* (Claim 9)
- l. The rolling bodies are spheres. *See col. 2:12-24.* (Claim 13)
- m. The driving means dynamically changes the rotational speed and/or rotational direction of the rolling bodies. *See col. 1:47-56, 3:65-4:22.* (Claim 15)

Art Unit: 3714

n. The rotating unit consists of a transparent disk member and rotates in a plan perpendicular to the vertical axis of the disk member. *See col. 3:45-4:5. (Claims 16-18)*

o. The game machine is a bingo game machine in which the result of the draw provides different effects to a plurality of game players. *See fig. 14; col. 1:6-9. (Claim 22)*

Thus, the claims are unpatentable because *Kaneko* teaches every feature.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 5-10, 14, 20 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Kaneko* in view of *Harris*, U.S. Patent 2,364,141 (Dec. 22, 1941).

As listed above, *Keneko* teaches all the features of the instant claims except a rolling-body supply means for supplying rolling bodies from the central portion of the rotating unit to the surface such that the rolling bodies randomly travel outwardly from the supplied position in a direction toward the periphery of the rotating unit (*claims 5, 14, 20, 21*) wherein the distance between the supply hole and the surface is equal in all directions (*claim 10*). Regardless of the deficiencies, the features were known in the art at the time of the invention and would have been obvious to an artisan in view of *Harris*.

Harris discloses an analogous ball-game device wherein outcomes are generated by rolling balls into locations on a rotating disk. *See fig. 9; col. 1:1-55*. In regards to the instant claims, the reference describes a ball-supply means wherein balls are released onto the rotating disk from centrally located

Art Unit: 3714

hole. *See fig. 3; col. 1:27-35, 3:51-61. Harris* suggests the device provides a simple yet visually amusing game for both players and onlookers. *See col. 1:5-11.*

In view of *Harris*, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the ball-game device taught by *Keneko*, wherein outcomes are generated shooting balls onto a rotating disk, to add the features of supplying rolling bodies from the central portion of the rotating unit to the surface such that the rolling bodies randomly travel outwardly from the supplied position in a direction toward the periphery of the rotating unit wherein the distance between the supply hole and the surface is equal in all directions. As suggested by *Harris*, the modification would enhance the device by providing a simple yet visually amusing game for both players and onlookers and thereby generate greater revenue for game operators due to the increased interest.

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Kaneko* in view of *Harris*, as applied to claims 5-12, 14, 10, 20 and 21 above, in further view of *Miller*, U.S. Patent 1,491,961 (Jan. 25, 1922).

The ball-game device described by the combination of *Kaneko* with *Harris* suggests all the features of the claimed subject matter except releasing a plurality of rolling bodies from the catching units simultaneously. Regardless of the deficiencies, the features were known in the art at the time of the invention and would have been obvious to an artisan in view of *Miller*.

Miller discloses an analogous game device in which rolling bodies are released onto a rotating unit from a central location and outcomes are generated based on the symbols associated the stopping positions. In regards to the claim, the reference discloses generating a combination of outcomes for a game based on the stopping position of a plurality of rolling bodies. *See col. 1:8-40.* Hence, *Miller* generally suggests generating multiple outcomes for games requiring a combination of outcomes by capturing more than one rolling body.

In view of *Miller*, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the ball-game device described by the combination of *Kaneko* with *Harris*, wherein the catching units release a ball after a set period, to add the feature of capturing a plurality of rolling bodies and releasing them the catching units simultaneously. As suggested by *Miller*, the modification would provide multiple outcomes by simultaneously releasing more than one rolling body onto the rotating unit. Consequently, the device would increase the rate of play resulting from the increased rate at which outcomes are generated and thereby generate greater operator revenue.

Claims 11 and 12 are is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Kaneko* in view of *Harris*, as applied to claims 5-10, 14, 20 and 21 above, in further view of *Rothen*, U.S. Patent 2,001,500 (Mar. 14, 1935).

The ball-game device described by the combination of *Kaneko* with *Harris* suggests all the features of the claimed subject matter except a return wall for returning each of the rolling bodies which has not been caught by any of the catching unit wherein the return wall accelerates the rolling body and returns the rolling body. Regardless of the deficiencies, the features were known in the art at the time of the invention and would have been obvious to an artisan in view of *Rothen*.

Rothen discloses an analogous game device in which a rotating unit upon which rolling bodies are released from a central location and outcomes are generated based on the symbols associated with bodies stopping positions. *See col. 1:12-41*. In specific regards to the claims, the reference describes a wall for confining the rolling bodies to the playing surface. As a natural consequence of striking the fixed wall, the momentum of the rolling bodies would result in acceleration and thereby return the rolling body to the game surface. Hence, *Rothen* generally suggests employing a return wall in a game device in which rolling bodies are released from a central location towards catching units located on the periphery of a surface in order to keep the rolling bodies in play.

Art Unit: 3714

In view of *Rothen*, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the ball-game device described by the combination of *Kaneko* with *Harris*, wherein rolling bodies are released from a central location towards catching units located on the periphery of a rotating surface, to add the feature of a return wall for returning each of the rolling bodies which has not been caught by any of the catching units wherein the return wall accelerates the rolling body and returns the rolling body. As suggested by *Rothen*, the modification would keep the rolling bodies in play and consequently, increase the likelihood of landing in a catching unit. As a result, the modification would increase the rate of play by generating more outcomes per attempt and thereby increase operator revenue ~~due~~^{AA} by avoiding null outcomes.

Conclusion

The following prior art is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure of record, but not relied upon:

Marshall Fey, *Slot Machines: A Pictorial History of the First 100 Years*, 5th Ed., Liberty Bell Books (1997) describes several roulette-type gaming devices wherein one or more balls are released onto a rotating surface to generate random outcomes according to the balls' landing position. Notably, the devices provide an outer wall for returning balls toward the catching units ~~and~~^{AA} thereby ensuring that each ball generates an outcome.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Steven Ashburn whose telephone number is 703 305 3543. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday thru Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tom Hughes can be reached on 703-308-1806. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703 872 9302 for

Art Unit: 3714

regular communications and 703 872 9303 for After Final communications. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703 308 1078.



Steven Ashburn
August 20, 2002



MARK SAGER
PRIMARY EXAMINER